

## THE WAR AND HOW TO END IT.

## CONVERT NOT CONQUER THE SOUTH.

## JUSTICE THE BEST STATESMANSHIP

## WENDELL PHILLIPS'S SPEECH

AT THE

## SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,

IN

Washington, March 14, 1862.

My FRIENDS: Though I am not myself witty, you must at least allow that I am the cause of wit in others. I have not come here to bring you anything worthy of the journey. I have only come here, as I sincerely believe, to say Amen to the brave words which you have heard from this platform, and that which have been uttered in yonder Capitol. I do not make any pretensions, ladies and gentlemen, as a speaker. I have talked a little on Anti-Slavery, but as Dr. Johnston remarked on a similar question, "I have only been able to do decently well what nobody else thought worth doing at all." [Laughter.] But I have come here to-night very willingly, because if a word of mine, or any number of words—any amount of effort—could add one atom of possibility to the chance that this war should carry comfort to the hovels of Carolina, I should deem my whole life an abundant success. I have no other object in life as far as I know, than to make this Union, which I have sought honestly to sever, meet justice to nineteen millions of people, and when I think we are willing to the bones of Carolina, I should deem my whole life an abundant success.

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Well, gentlemen, as an Abolitionist (and I am little more) devoted for thirty years toward having the negro recognized as a man in these thirty-four States, I confess I have no other interest in politics than that this Union should do him justice—should do itself the credit to show that it is educated up to the point of doing him justice.

I repeat—as an Abolitionist—I have not any great interest in this war; that is, I have no interest in the choice of paths out of which the Government shall lead us, because, as far as I am able to study events and results, I honestly believe that whatever this convolution does, or fails to do, one thing no man, no party can prevent its doing, and that is, shaking off the chains of every negro on the continent. [Applause.]

I do not mean that any man intends it, for I don't care what man intends. When a person gets into the Rapids of Niagara, it doesn't matter much what he or she intends, they will go over. [That's so.] In my view the system of bondage in these States has received its death-blow in the house of its friends. I do not believe that Slavery can survive the effects of this convolution. As an Abolitionist simply, I feel just as much at ease in looking at this war as one of you do when looking at Barey with Crusader in his hand. No master for the red eyes and panting sides of the brute, he will go down. So I know all the brutes south of us will go down to destruction, and I base my opinion on two or three very patent facts. In the first place, for the last ten years the plot that has been thrown in our teeth all the time is that "Cotton is King." The overseer made his whip much longer than to extend over the Senate of the United States. He added an additional snapper, and applied it to the Lower House of Congress, and that was, "Cotton is King." He supposed he could bring starving Lancashire with one hand and tumultuous Lyons with the other, to his footstool. He has tried it. What has been the result? The Board of Trade reports to Great Britain that after the abdication of King Cotton for eleven months Great Britain has more cotton than she had at this time last year. [Applause.] So much for one part of the system—the financial.

Well, then, the other was the political. It was the North at the feet of the South. I have no wonder that the South despised her. She never met in yonder Capitol a man from the North who had a backbone until within a few years. She had cause to despise us.

But she tried an experiment in miniature. Missouri pledged herself against Kansas, and the South threw down the gauntlet of a single State. She sent her peasants, her farmers, west of the Mississippi. They went as peasants and as farmers. The civilization of the North, which means ploughshares and school-houses, took the field in the Territory against bowie-knives and bludgeons, which represent the South. They were fairly matched, John Brown, the most influential American in aiding our civilization [applause], a man who has done more in the Providence of God to shape the fate of this generation than any other man ever one, whom I am prone to name and set at his feet, William Lloyd Garrison. [Applause, with one or two hisses.] John Brown went to Kansas, a farmer, with the best stock, and owner of the best orchard west of the Mississippi. He carried as pledges of a good citizen the prizes he had won in the Agricultural fairs of Ohio; he didn't even own a gun, nor a fowling-piece. He planted his trees, advertised his stock, and it was not until Missourians came across the border and destroyed his orchard, and stole his cattle, that the old man went out and bought a musket. The history of Kansas since is written too painful for me to repeat it. She crushed Missouri under her feet, and has taken her seat in the Senate of the United States, a representative of free thought and free labor in the United States. [Applause.] What Missouri did to Kansas, the South does to the North to-day.

Napoleon said of Russia, "I taught her to fight, and so has Missouri taught us what the Slave Power means, and what this contest means—conscience behind a rifle." [Laughter and applause.] Now, how much will you say?

SEVERAL VOICES.—All that.

Now we have gone along for 30 years. Now Slavery breaks the bond. South Carolina takes her 400,000 bondsmen out of the reach of Massachusetts' ideas. She breaks the pledge that she made to Massachusetts. Massachusetts got down on her knees and returned Anthony Burns and Thos. Sims. What was the equivalent? The equivalent was that if you leave Slavery under our general influence it will get out. Well, now, South Carolina tries to take her 400,000 men out of the reach of Massachusetts. Well, last Spring told Go. I didn't then entertain the same opinion of the North in its position on this question as I do now, and that was the reason for my saying so. And I think to-day that unless this was result in liberty it would be better she had gone—indeedly better. Unless, within 12 months or so, Maryland is a free State, Delaware and half Virginia, and we be enabled to look east and west of the Atlantic, we cannot do anything. [Applause.]

I value the Message, not because Mr. Abraham Lincoln speaks, for he can neither preserve Slavery nor kill it. It does not lie in the power of any single individual to do either. It lies in the Government, in the public. He is nothing without the approval and support of the public. What I desire, to impress you with a deep conviction of the responsibility which rests upon you as a part of the 19,000,000. You cannot expect the President to do this work alone. We are his right hand and his left. How much will you do? He has come out from the Cabinet and held out his hand. To how much will the people respond? I, for one, say, "Go on, old man, I am with you." [Laughter and applause.] Now, how much will you say?

Mr. PHILLIPS.—I trust, secondly, for the suicide of the slave system to the fact, that the South has re-enacted Missouri, and the North is re-enacting Kansas to-day. Educated in understanding the Slave Power, educated in knowing how much and how far it must resist, and what must be its means of resistance, we should be up to the importance of the moment, and seize the golden opportunity for forever wresting our beloved land from the insidious influence of the slave propagandists. Every cannon fired to-day is a better Anti-Slavery lecture than a thousand men like myself or my brother (Dr. Pierpont) could evoke. Every canon that Halleck has fired, or McClellan has heard (he has never fired one), [prolonged laughter and applause], is a better Anti-Slavery speech than was ever made in yonder Senate, or Faneuil Hall, for it teaches the Northern people the meaning of the crisis, and takes them up to the responsibility of the hour. My second hope of the death of Slavery is, therefore, as I have shown, based upon the education which this war gives.

The third is based on another consideration. For the first time the gates of the bury of holes have opened and we have heard a voice from the cemetery of God. From the Cabinet, where voices in suspense and awe command the fifteen million of the North to point to-day, we have heard a voice from the message of Abraham Lincoln to the Border States.

[Three cheers were here proposed for the President, which were responded to with the greatest enthusiasm.]

the greater portion of the audience rising to their feet.)

A message of which I hold the practical amount to be this: "Gentlemen of the Border States now is your time to act. [Laughter.] If you do not now, and the exigencies of the Government require it in a few months that we should take without a struggle, then, don't say I didn't give you due warning. [Laughter and applause.] That is a very remarkable document—that message of the President.

I am not practically acquainted with all its parts, but they say that in making a large log and making it into a nail, the first thing you do is to apply a small wedge. Well this is a very small one, a wedge, indeed. [Renewed laughter and applause.] The negro preacher said, "If I found in the Bible a command to go through that state, getting well, I should go at it. Going at it is my part, getting well, I should go at it. Going at it is my part, getting well, I should go at it. Getting at it is the President's part, and getting him through is the people's part. [Laughter.] Now, if I am here for any peculiar purpose to-night, Mr. President, it is to persuade you, ladies and gentlemen, to help the President through. [Applause.]

The slaves know that such is their message. [Applause.]

And when General Scott went to South Carolina, and buried its doors against the slaves, they came 2,000 strong, and broke them open. And so will it be everywhere. The slave will recognize in the Lee camp a command to go through that state, getting well, I should go at it. Getting at it is the President's part, and getting him through is the people's part. [Laughter and applause.]

The slaves know that such is their message. [Applause.]

When Kentucky and Tennessee said, We want to go North, what did Davis say? Why, you can't go; we want you. What is this in an exhibition of? Why of their so-called State sovereignty. If South Carolina has a right to go South, why has not Kentucky a right to go North? But the real meaning is, that they were trying to fortify so idea—trying to defend an institution; they wanted that power, and Kentucky could not do it. Believe me, this is not a Secession movement, but a conspiracy.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, or rather, men and women, you who are responsible for the future, the question is, whether Liberty or Slavery shall rule this great continent, and South Carolina knows it. She has the statehoodship to know it. She said to Massachusetts in 1855, "abominable free speech; it is a nuisance." Well, it is to her. [Laughter and applause.]

What she really meant was, that she could not live with free speech; and she can't. And the question to-night is, as to what extent she can trample free speech under her feet. The South is as sincere as we are in this struggle. Ten millions of people comprise twenty millions by the thousand, and both intensely, enthusiastically, and from the bottom of their hearts, believe they are fighting for an idea that holds the salvation of the world. I honor South Carolina for her sincerity. There is no doubt about her being what she says. It is a conspiracy to have her ideas govern the continent. Our fathers gave us this idea; d'you own it? Our fathers gave us this idea; d'you own it? Let me tell you, it is a disloyal act to abolish Slavery, to be a traitor to the nation, to be a traitor to the world. [Applause.]

They tried it, and I am willing, for one, that they should have the experiment of two governments—perfectly willing. They tried it under the Constitution, to see whether Massachusetts and South Carolina could live together. They united in a bond of parchment. In other words, they put power and fire into a cannon, screwed up at the muzzle, and thought to assimilate the two. Mr. Webster did, supposing these ideas had been assimilated [laughter], but the confederacy had come, and caused an explosion. We stand to-day among the pieces. And until this moment the Cabinet has been a joint committee of the Atlantic and the Pacific. And now, I am one of the people—I am a Democrat, I have passed forty odd years talking, and if God would let me forty more, I shall still keep talking, and if God would let me forty more, I shall still keep talking, in order to make this nation strong enough, so as to have any other nation dare to it what deems it fit to do. Still more than that I had another act of his. Further, let me say that I have somewhat doubted whether the Cabinet returned the Commissioners from magnanimity or through fear. It was an equal act, and when a weak man is always for an error at the feet of a strong one, it is not always easy to discern what his motive is. He only wants to see how he stands at the feet of a single and weak individual.

As I have already said, I speak to you to-night, not as an Abolitionist, but as a citizen, anxious as to what path, under your direction, the Government shall choose. And it is in that position that I criticize the action of the Government and the position of the people to-day. It is in that view that I hold the measure of the President. Still more than that I had another act of his. Further, let me say that I have somewhat doubted whether the Cabinet returned the Commissioners from magnanimity or through fear. It was an equal act, and when a weak man is always for an error at the feet of a strong one, it is not always easy to discern what his motive is. He only wants to see how he stands at the feet of a single and weak individual.

The Government put itself at the feet of Great Britain, and returned the Commissioners. Well, now, I am one of the people—I am a Democrat, I have passed forty odd years talking, and if God would let me forty more, I shall still keep talking, and if God would let me forty more, I shall still keep talking, in order to make this nation strong enough, so as to have any other nation dare to it what deems it fit to do. Still more than that I had another act of his. Further, let me say that I have somewhat doubted whether the Cabinet returned the Commissioners from magnanimity or through fear. It was an equal act, and when a weak man is always for an error at the feet of a strong one, it is not always easy to discern what his motive is. He only wants to see how he stands at the feet of a single and weak individual.

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